

REMARKS

The office action of December 28, 2007, has been carefully considered.

It is noted that claim 2 is objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.75(c).

Claims are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over EP 0045658.

Claim 7 is allowed.

In view of the Examiner's object to and rejection of the claims, applicant has amended claims 1 and 2.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims presently on file differ essentially and in an unobvious, highly advantageous manner from the constructions disclosed in the reference.

Turning now to the reference, it can be seen that EP '658 discloses a method for monitoring the operation of a gas inlet orifice below the surface of a liquid under the action of positive gas pressure. EP '658 has a transducer for measuring pressure, but

there is no disclosure of a restrictor that actively reduces or interrupts the gas supply to the interior of the furnace at equal intervals of time, as in the presently claimed invention.

In view of these considerations it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over the above-discussed reference is overcome and should be withdrawn.

Applicant has also amended claim 2 so that it further limits the subject matter of claim 1. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the objection to claim 2 under 37 C.F.R. 1.75(c) is overcome and should be withdrawn.

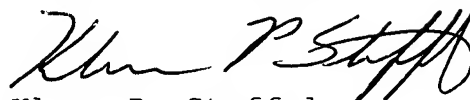
Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

Any additional fees or charges required at this time in connection with this application may be charged to Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 11-1835.

HM-623

Respectfully submitted,

By



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**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING**

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on March 28, 2008.

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Date: March 28, 2008